



**AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
August 7, 2013**

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Nelson Linder, Chair  
Sherry Cherry  
Wayne Cook  
Dr. Chiquita Eugene

Clifford Gillard  
Daryl Horton  
Greg Smith, Vice Chair

**CALL TO ORDER—5:30 P.M.**

The meeting was called to order at 5:40pm by Commissioner Linder.

**1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION**

Mr. Phil Burns spoke to the Commission regarding an ethics complaint against the Parks & Recreation Department regarding information released on a timeline for construction of the pool and asking the Commission to request an audit of the project by the Office of the City Auditor.

Mr. Richard Franklin spoke to the Commission regarding racism in Austin and continued disparities for minorities. Mr. Franklin also asked the Commission to recommend funding for his entrepreneur program and a program where police officers would read to children which would provide pleasant interaction between officers and children.

**THERE MAY BE DISCUSSION ON ANY OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:**

**2. Approval of the minutes from the July 10, 2013 Regular Meeting**

The minutes stand as presented.

**3. Updates from Working Groups**

**a. Health and Mental Health**

Commissioner Cherry reported that the Working Group had developed their first recommendation and was working to produce a recommendation for funding of the programs recommended.

**b. Small Business/Parking Issues on E. 11<sup>th</sup> & E. 12<sup>th</sup> Streets**

Commissioner Smith reported that the Working Group had met with City staff and community members for a brainstorming session on parking issues. The Working Group continues outreach to the business owners on E. 11<sup>th</sup> and E. 12<sup>th</sup> Streets to obtain more input.



**4. Possible Action: Approval of Commission Recommendation on Behavioral Health Education and Awareness Campaign for African Americans**

**A motion to approve a Recommendation to the City Council on a Behavioral Mental Health Education and Awareness Campaign for African Americans was made by Commissioner Cook; seconded by Commissioner Smith. Vote 7-0.**

**5. Update: Colony Park Sustainable Community Initiative (Zach Stern, Neighborhood Housing & Community Development Department)**

Mr. Zach Stern of the Neighborhood Housing & Community Development Department updated the Commission on the current status of the 3-year planning grant from the U. S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. The grant, in the amount of \$3,000,000, will provide an opportunity for the City of Austin to plan for the development of an approximately 208 acre tract in the Colony Park Neighborhood. City staff has been working with the Colony Park Neighborhood Association and receiving feedback on the City's efforts.

**6. Update: Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant Initiative for Rosewood Court (Eileen Schrandt, Housing Authority of the City of Austin)**

Ms. Eileen Schrandt of the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) provided an update on the planning grant for the Rosewood area which includes Rosewood Court. Ms. Schrandt stated that HACA had received a grant for \$300,000 in order to create a plan for property renovation and upgrade of services to residents in the area. HACA is about 10 months into the 24-month process and is doing outreach to various parts of the community in order to receive input from as many citizens as possible.

Mr. Fred McGhee provided some history of the Rosewood Court development stating that funding for the project was originally secured by then Senator Lyndon B. Johnson. The project was dedicated on March 1, 1939. Mr. McGhee stated that a number of residents are not in favor of the changes that are being planned for Rosewood Court.

Ms. Ora Houston stated that the community did not want Rosewood Court to become a "mixed income" community which may contribute to additional gentrification of the area. Ms. Houston stated that it would be in the best interest of the community to preserve the historic property.

**7. Presentation and Possible Action: Approve a Recommendation on 2013-14 Budget Request for Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty, and Justice, Inc. (MEEELJ) (Latreese Cooke, Executive Director, MEEELJ)**

Ms. Latreese Cooke, Executive Director of MEEELJ, provided some background information on the request for the Commission to recommend their budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year stating that they were not requesting any additional funds, but the same amount as allocated by the City Council for the 2012-13 fiscal year. Ms. Cooke relayed that 80% of employers will not hire ex-offenders and they also have difficulty finding housing once released from incarceration.

**A motion to approve a recommendation to the City Council in support of a budget request for Minorities for Equality in Employment, Education, Liberty, and Justice, Inc. (MEEELJ) in the amount of \$441,000 in the City of Austin 2013-14 Budget was made by Commissioner Smith; seconded by Commissioner Gillard. Vote 7-0.**



**8. Discussion and Possible Action: Completion of photo selection for mural at the African American Cultural & Heritage Center**

Ms. Roxanne Evans, Executive Assistant to Deputy City Manager Michael McDonald, presented information on the meetings held with the artist, Reginald Adams, to discuss the possible addition of portraits to the "Reflections" mural at the African American Cultural & Heritage Facility. Ms. Evans stated that Mr. Adams has determined that an additional 22 portraits can be installed to complete the mural without disturbing the original artwork. Mr. Adams also stated that an additional 32 portraits could be added with the addition of 2 complimentary benches designed to house the additional 32 portraits. The 22 portraits to be added to the mural would be done as soon as possible, with the additional 32 portraits to be added to the benches in the future as individuals are identified over time, thus extending the lifespan of the project. Deputy City Manager Michael McDonald stated that funding in the amount of \$19,986 (artist estimate) has been identified.

**With the new information brought forward, a motion to support the additional work to the mural and the addition of 22 portraits to the existing mural as well as the creation of 2 benches with capacity for an additional 32 portraits that would be added as part of an annual event by the Commission was made by Commissioner Eugene; seconded by Commissioner Smith. Vote 7-0. The selection of portraits will be made by the original Working Group of the Commission.**

**9. Discussion: Public Safety Issues regarding citizen interaction with Austin Police Department**

Commissioner Cherry requested the formation of a Working Group to study the issue. Commissioner Linder stated that there was a need to change the State penal code and that change was needed in all levels of government. Commissioner Gillard stated that this Commission should be a leader in requesting change.

Ms. Ora Houston spoke to the Commission regarding police shootings and stating that she feels traumatized by a lack of police authority.

Ms. Debbie Russell stated she had been following this issue and has gathered a lot of data that could be made available to the Commission. Ms. Russell also stated that it may be time for a dialog with the community on this issue.

**10. Set agenda items for future meetings, including non-substantive housekeeping matters (such as meeting dates, potential topics, and information and research requests for staff)**

The September agenda should include a presentation on Public Safety from the Public Safety Commission (this item to include action on creation of a Working Group), and a presentation from Keep Austin Affordable.

**11. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05pm.